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Henry Hastings Hall to W S Hall, 26 August 1877

Mandurah Aug 26 1877

My dear Shake,

Your very kind letter of July 4<sup>th</sup> containing three gold coins bearing the Image and Superscription of her Gracious Majesty, is to hand, and whilst thanking you for the enclosure I think it right to say that both my wife and I are of opinion that I ought to return it to you as soon as I get some money from some of the others better able than you are (at present) to afford it, but at the same time we fully appreciate your liberal feeling and when you are more prosperous we should not hesitate to receive occasional assistance from you as well as others. I have found throughout this sad affair those who are most able are least willing. I don't know whether I told you in my last Fanny Bracher sent a kind letter enclosing a pound and said she should assist a little as her means would allow, but I know she does a good for her mother. Frances Hester is married to Arthur Heppingstone and she wrote to say she would not forget Alice, and our sister Theodosia has promised to help us a little, so I think we shall be able to get on with Alice if those who can will do a simple duty by lending a helping hand. At the same time I would rather someone else had been willing to take charge of her, I would gladly have made a much more liberal annual allowance, than any one else is likely to do. I wish I had had greater opportunities of finding out from Alice's poor mother more about her, as to capabilities, treatment, &c. Our departed sister in speaking of her always used to say — you must *make* her do this or that, and I find she has such an aversion to do anything except eat and drink, play and sleep, that *make* is the proper word. Dora makes her wash and iron her own clothes and that is all she does — she is very fond of swinging, and I have seen her stay in the swing for three hours at a time. I have often seen these imbeciles before, and there is frequently some quality or virtue in them that calls forth one's sympathy or love — but all we can discover in poor Alice is of a sadly repulsive nature — selfishness greed sloth and other bad qualities, without as far as we can see one redeeming feature. The most depraved or stupid animals in existence generally possess some feeling akin to love or

attachment at least for the mother who bore them. I don't think she is troubled many minutes about anything, and if all her relations were swept away at once I don't think it would make any impression. Mrs Steere seemed to feel it very much that Alice cared nothing for her mother. If the girl was a downright idiot there would be every excuse, but she is not, she often talks very sensibly. I think on account of her failings she has been very much indulged and spoilt.

With my poor sister's money there was an order of Mr Haghe on Habgood for £4. Habgood would not pay it — he said he had settled up with Haghe who was gone to the Margaret River. I wrote to him but have never heard a word since. Would it be any good to return it to you, could you get the party you took it from to take it back? I think you should be careful about taking the orders of people who have left. I've a good mind to place the thing in Parker's hands for recovery. Dora and I think that you and your wife behaved very nobly to our departed sister, when you could not *really* afford to do anything, and in getting her up to the Swan you acted wisely and well: and now she is gone it must be a source of inward gratification to you both to know that you did what you could, in fact all that could be done. I pray that you may get over your present difficulties, and prosper as you deserve. I see pearls are almost unsaleable — many people here are heavy losers. You ask me to write more about my wife & boy. I think, as Mr Barlee said when requested to propose the health of the ladies, at a dinner, "The less I say about them the better." I am happy to say they are quite well. Dora had more work then she could comfortably do before Alice came, and now she has a good deal more. Leslie is getting on very well with reading and writing, and is beginning to understand something about addition, and the multiplication table, he does not go to School except on Sundays. He is fond of reading, but never has taken very willingly to his lessons. They often have to be done under the shadow of the Cane — but I suppose he'll get better in time. His father when the same age liked spelling and sums about as well as he liked snakes and birch rods.

I approve of your idea of teaching your boys the use of their fists, not necessarily for the purpose of bullying others, but that they may be able to take the part of the weak or to defend the right. I tell Leslie I shall send him to you for some instruction in the *noble art*.

We are having a splendid season. I am not growing any corn, I have 2 cwt of potatoes in and looking well: the late boisterous weather has injured some of the crops about, but not mine. We lost a cow worth £8 a short time ago. Our herd does not increase. Eight years ago we had eight head, I have killed one and sold one and we have eight head now & two young calves; they are changed twice a year to the hills. Ed Hester said, when I told him about them, that if they had been at the Blackwood the same we should have had a good herd now. We are not to make a fortune with cattle. E H is at the Swan selling 800 or 900 sheep. His sheep have not been doing well and he is selling all but one flock and going in for more cattle. I find my dear brother I must close this, so with our united kind love to you, wife and family

Ever your affecte brother

[signature torn off]